

STATE OF ALASKA

DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION AND PUBLIC FACILITIES

DIVISION OF STATEWIDE PLANNING

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June 6, 2000

Mr. Robert S. Juettner
Administrator
Aleutians East Borough
1600 A Street, Suite 103
Anchorage, AK 99501-5146

Dear Mr. Juettner:

Thank you for your letter of April 18 concerning the *Draft Southwest Alaska Transportation Plan Airport Improvement Analysis Technical Memorandum*. Your comments were critical of the document's adequacy in accurately reflecting weekly demand in pounds as expressed in Table 6, and you provided information relative to design aircraft at Akutan and Sand Point. Your input is very much appreciated. I will try to address your points briefly here.

We share your disappointment with the accuracy of the data in this draft document. The memorandum is being extensively revised (our consolidated comments to the consultant were seven pages in length). We have taken specific steps to include additional enplanement and cargo data from the U.S. Postal Service that was not included in the document you reviewed. Additionally, our model developer for the YK aviation analysis has met with the consultant team to reconcile the different regional economic characteristics and factor those into the SW aviation model. We uncovered several data entry errors in the model spreadsheets, and we identified several airports that should have been included in the analysis but were not. We rushed this one out the door to get it to people in time for comments at the April 7 SWAMC meeting. In retrospect, we should have given it a better internal review before mailing it out. Unfortunately we can't take it back, but we can do better. And we will, Concerning your specific comments:

•**Design aircraft for Sand Point** - There is currently no airport master plan for Sand Point.

According to Jack Melton, the most recent arrangement with the FAA concerning the Sand Point runway extension (from a 1999 teleconference involving FAA, DOT&PF and AEB) specified design group B-III for the airport, using a Douglas DC-6 as the design aircraft. The design allows for less than 500 jet aircraft operations per year. The project manager for design is John Wahl 269-0611. The Airport Improvement Analysis aims to identify suitable airframes that are projected to be available as "fleet replacement" aircraft in Alaska between now and 2020 that would support the anticipated demand. Hence the Beechcraft 1900. We are essentially trying to identify a more realistic design aircraft for the future, one that we could anticipate the regional airlines like PenAir making use of. The "youngest" DC-6s are over 40 years old! Some are over 50. At one time, design group C-IV was considered for Sand Point according to Carl Siebe in our Statewide Aviation office; but the 1999 discussions would have superseded that. Besides, the

aircraft in design group C-IV (DC-8, 757, 767, Airbus 300) are not in wide use in Alaska nor are they projected to be.

● Enplanements for Akutan - FAA records show a reasonably consistent pattern from 1988 to 1996, with a low of 2,031 in 1989 and a high of 4,233 in 1992, averaging around 2,700. The only years over 3,000 in the 1988-1996 period were 1990-1992. As far as the future goes, our population forecasts are for a decline in Akutan's population, even in the high case, and so we're also showing a decline in enplanements. We recognize the somewhat erratic nature of small community population estimates as pointed out in a 1998 Advisory Committee meeting. If you have data to the contrary we would be glad to review it and factor it into the demand estimates. One thing to keep in mind is that the plan is still just that - a plan. It is a framework for action, not an inflexible instrument of oppression when circumstances deviate significantly from what was planned for.

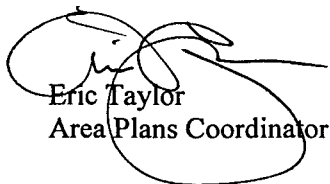
● Design aircraft for Akutan - The study identified a design aircraft suitable for the projected 2020 demand assuming an on-the-ground air facility could be built. The Grumman Goose would not be an appropriate design for 2020, since it will no longer be in service. The airport master plan (see below) will make the ultimate determination for design aircraft.

● Akutan Airport Master Plan - We are aware of the airport master plan project being conducted at Akutan and the phasing out of the Grumman Goose. The planning team developed a ferry option concept for Akutan for this very reason (*see the Description of Alternatives Technical Memorandum* (Aug 1999), pages 93-99) in the event the airport master plan could not identify suitable land for an adequate runway on the island.

Concerning Aleutians East Borough's previous comments, I am aware of one previous written communication to the consultant Parsons Brinckerhoff dated February 17, 1998. We have also received correspondence from City of Akutan. If you feel that the planning consultant has been unresponsive to your concerns, I would ask you to forward any comments you feel have been left unanswered to either Jeff Ottesen or myself, and we will get you an answer.

If you have additional comments or questions please feel free to contact me via letter, email (eric-taylor@dot.state.ak.us), toll free phone 1-888-PLANDOT or toll-free fax 1-888-PLANFAX. We have added your letter and this response to our SW Transportation Plan Correspondence Reading Room on the internet at the following URL:
http://www.dot.state.ak.us/external/state_wide/planning/swcorr/swcorr.html
Thanks again for your interest and involvement.

Sincerely,


Eric Taylor
Area Plans Coordinator